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ABSTRACT

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Competition, Non-Competition, and Race as Determinants of Outgroup Discrimination

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Abstract

The present experiment investigated factors which enhance the salience of group membership and consequent ingroup bias. Subject dyads, who were always white, interacted either competitively or interdependently with either white or black confederate dyads. Ingroup bias was assessed as a function of attraction toward the outgroup (experimental confederates) relative to the ingroup (naive subjects). The greater the difference between ingroup and outgroup attraction, the greater the ingroup bias. Results demonstrated that ingroup bias was greater when groups were competitive than when they were interdependent, and greater when the outgroup was black than when the outgroup was white. Further, the greatest ingroup bias resulted when a white ingroup was competitive with a black outgroup. These findings were discussed in terms of social identity/social comparison theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the etiology of social competition (Turner, 1975).

Studies of intergroup conflict and competition have reflected two dominant themes over the years. These approaches are exemplified in the contrast between the research of Sherif (Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961) and research by Deutsch (1973) and Pruitt and Kimmel (1977), for example. In the latter instance the research can be described as an interaction between two or more individuals in which the unit of analysis is based upon individual characteristics but generalized to intergroup negotiations and bargaining. In the former instance the focus is upon group memberships of the participants with little, if any, attention given to individual or personal characteristics. Sherif's theory of intergroup relations can be summarized as a conflict or convergence of interest approach in which the psychological processes that occur are understood in terms of the relationship between the goals of the interacting groups (Doise & Sinclair, 1973).

Recently, Turner (1975) has proposed a theory of social competition which postulates a unilateral tendency toward competition in the relations between groups. This theory asserts that group membership is the basis for ingroup/outgroup discrimination. According to Turner, social competition stems from social categorization as defined and investigated by Tajfel's (1970) minimal group paradigm. In this paradigm subjects are randomly classified as members of two nonoverlapping

groups ostensibly on the basis of some trivial performance criterion, e.g. an expressed preference for paintings by one of two artists, or by the estimation of the number of dots in an array. The important aspect of these groups is that they are purely cognitive. Studies using this paradigm demonstrate that outgroup members are evaluated less favorably and allocated fewer rewards than are ingroup members, and that this behavior is maintained even when subjects do not benefit from such behavior. This ingroup bias, the tendency to favor the ingroup over the outgroup in evaluations and behavior, is the laboratory analog of real-world discrimination (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Of interest in the present study is the question of factors which increase the salience of group membership thereby enhancing categorization effects.

Worchel and his colleagues demonstrated that explicit competition between groups and physical distinctiveness are two such factors. Worchel, Andreoli, and Folger (1977) found that intergroup competition significantly decreased attraction between ingroup and outgroup in comparison with cooperative and interdependent groups. In another study Worchel, Axsom, Ferris, Samaha, and Schweitzer (1978) investigated the presence of physical characteristics that distinguish groups. In this study, physical distinctiveness was operationalized by differences in dress such that subjects in two groups either dressed similarily (both groups wore white lab coats) or dressed dissimilarily (subjects in one groups wore white coats while subjects in a second group wore red coats). As was the case for explicit

competition, physical distinctiveness increased rejection of the outgroup.

The results of Worchel's research provide evidence that one outcome of competitive interactions is to define individuals as members of different social categories. Further, physical distinctiveness seems to strengthen the group boundaries generated by competition. For example, Worchel et al. (1978) found that distinctive groups in a competitive relationship were least attracted to each other. It seems that at least one aspect of ingroup bias is salient intergroup differences. It has been suggested that salient intergroup differences is an aspect of interracial conflict (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Worchel et al., 1978). Based on this premise, the present study sought to replicate Worchel's research with physical distinctiveness defined by skin color. Accordingly, it was predicted that greater ingroup bias will result when (1) interacting groups are racially dissimilar than when they are racially similar, and (2) when interacting groups are competitive rather than interdependent. The greatest ingroup bias will result when racially dissimilar groups interact competitively.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 56 white female college students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the University of Maryland who participated in return for extra course credit. Additionally, all subjects were given a coupon for complementary food at the

Roy Rogers Restaurant located on campus. No subjects expressed suspicion regarding the manipulation.

Design

The study was a 2x2 factorial in which type of interaction between groups (competitive vs interdependent) and race of the outgroup (similar vs dissimilar) were beween-subjects variables. Naive subjects served as the ingroup, and experimental confederates served as the outgroup. Thus it was possible to insure that the ingroup was always white while the outgroup was either white or black. Subjects, who were unacquainted prior to the study, were randomly assigned in pairs to one of four conditions (n=7 pairs per condition). In each condition, a minimum of five different pairs of confederates served as outgroups.

Procedure

A group consisting of two naive subjects and two experimental confederates assembled for each experimental session. They were told that the purpose of the study was to investigate the efficiency and performance of small working groups, and that conditions during the study would simulate business and industrial situations. Group members were then informed that for the first part of the study they would be divided into two small groups. Each of these groups would work on identical tasks for the same amount of time, and each small

group would be expected to devise solutions to its tasks within the time periods allotted.

Similarity of Race. On the basis of an alledgedly random procedure, the two naive subjects were told that they would be the members of one small group, while the other two participants would be members of the other group. The other two participants were either white confederates (Similar Race condition) or black confederates (Dissimilar Race condition).

Type of Interaction. After announcing the partnerships, the experimenter manipulated the type of interaction to take place between the two small groups. In the Interdependent conditions, subjects were told that the solutions devised by each small group would be combined in such a way as to provide the best overall solution to the task. If this combined solution met a predetermined standard, members of both groups would earn points toward winning a prize to be awarded at the end of the experiment. It was emphasized that both groups could win. In the Competition conditions, subjects were told that the solutions devised by each small group would be compared in order to determine which solution came closest to meeting a predetermined standard. The members of the group with the better solution would each earn points toward winning a prize to be awarded at the end of the experiment. It was emphasized that one group would win and one group would lose. The first task was distributed, and the groups were placed in separate rooms.

For their first assignment, subjects read the case history of a delinquent adolescent and recommended an approach to his rehabilitation. They were given eight minutes for this task, and were told that they must reach a joint decision on the solution. At the end of the time period, the experimenter returned to collect the subjects' solution and said, "While you are working on the next task, another psychologist who is helping with this study will evaluate the answers from both groups." For subjects in the interdependent conditions, the experimenter added: "He will combine your recommendation with that of the other group in a way which provides the best solution, and if this solution meets the standard, each of you will earn points toward winning a prize." For subjects in the Competitive conditions, the experimenter added: "He will compare your recommendation with that of the other group, and if your solution is better, you two will each earn points toward winning a prize." After collecting the subjects' solution to the first task, the experimenter told them they would have five minutes in which to write an advertising slogan for a new brand of toothpaste. Subjects were again reminded of the nature of the group relationship by being told either that both groups could win or that only one group could win. When subjects had completed the second task they were reunited with the confederates

Subjects and confederates, now assembled in the same room, were told that the experiment would continue while the solutions to the first two tasks were being assessed. Group members were

asked to complete a questionnaire which would "help us evaluate the effects of first impressions on group performance." The questionnaire consisted of several items which asked subjects to rate their impressions of the two tasks as well as their impressions of the other people in the study. After collecting this questionnaire, the experimenter asked the confederates to wait outside while she discussed the results of the first two tasks with the subjects. The subjects were then probed for suspicion, thoroughly debriefed, and awarded their experimental credit and bonus food coupon.

Measures

Two items on the questionnaire constituted measures of attraction, and were expected to reflect ingroup bias. One of these items asked subjects to rate how much they liked each of the other people in the study. Four 20-point scales with endpoints labeled "like very much" and "like very little" accompanied this item so that each subject could rate each of the other participants. A second item asked subjects to rate each of the other participants on friendliness and was accompanied by four 20-point scales, each with endpoints labeled "friendly" and "unfriendly". By combining liking and friendliness scores, it was possible to obtain a measure of subjects' attraction toward the ingroup and a measure of their attraction toward the outgroup.

Results

Since subjects were randomly assigned to treatments in pairs, the unit of analysis was the dyad. Dyadic outgroup scores were obtained by averaging subjects' liking and friendliness ratings of the confederates. Dyadic ingroup scores were obtained by averaging subjects' liking and friendliness ratings of each other. Results of the 2x2 analyses of variance performed separately on outgroup means and on ingroup means revealed no significant effects. Therefore, relative attraction scores were obtained by subtracting dyadic outgroup scores from dyadic ingroup scores.

Manipulation check. Subjects rated their mood toward the ingroup and then their mood toward the outgroup on 20-point scales with endpoints labeled "cooperative" (1) and "competitive" (20). Results were assessed on the basis of the difference between subjects' mean ratings of themselves (ingroup) and their mean ratings of the confederates (outgroup). Relative to themselves, subjects rated their mood toward the outgroup as more cooperative in the Interdependent conditions (Mn=3.46) than in the Competitive conditions (Mn=11.64). This difference was significant ($F_{(1,24)} = 27.59$, p .001) indicating that the manipulation of type of group interaction was successful. Subjects who were assigned to the Interdependent conditions felt significantly more cooperative toward the outgroup than did subjects who were assigned to the Competitive conditions. There were no other effects for this variable.

The relative attraction scores were initially analyzed using analyses of covariance with first the ingroup attraction scores and then the outgroup attraction scores as the covariate. Results demonstrated a main effect for type of interaction when variance due to either ingroup or outgroup attraction was held constant. Means from these analyses indicated that competition resulted in increased intragroup attraction as well as in decreased intergroup attraction. However, with either ingroup or outgroup attraction held constant, there were no significant effects for race of the outgroup. We concluded therefore that ingroup bias was due to the joint effects on both ingroup attraction and outgroup attraction. Final analyses, therefore, were performed on mean relative attraction scores.

The mean relative attraction scores between the ingroup and the outgroup are presented in Table 1. The greater the mean, the less the relative attraction toward the outgroup or, inversely,

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Insert Table 1 about here

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the greater the ingroup bias.

The relative attraction scores were analyzed in a 2x2 factorial analysis of variance. All hypotheses received significant support. A main effect for type of interaction reflected a significant difference between mean relative attraction in the Interdependent conditions and mean relative attraction in the Competitive conditions ($F_{(1,24)} = 9.35$,

p=.005). Thus, as predicted, there was greater ingroup bias under competitive conditions (Mn=15.80) than under interdependent conditions (Mn=9.93).

Similarily, the main effect for race of the outgroup variable resulted from the significant difference beween mean relative attraction for the white outgroup and mean relative attraction for the black outgroup ($F_{(1,24} = 6.82$, $p = .01$). This difference supports the hypothesis of greater ingroup bias when the outgroup is racially dissimilar (Mn=15.38) than when the outgroup is racially similar (Mn=10.36).

Finally, based on F-tests for individual comparisons, the difference between mean attraction for the ingroup and mean attraction for the outgroup was found to be significantly greater for racially dissimilar competitive groups (Mn=17.43) than for any other condition. This outcome supports the hypothesis that the combined effects of competition and racial dissimilarity produce the greatest ingroup bias.

Discussion

In the present study, the effect of explicit competition between groups on ingroup bias was as much a function of increased ingroup attraction as it was of decreased outgroup attraction. Conversely, the effect for race of the outgroup was clearly a joint function of the changes in these attraction ratings. Thus, while both competition and skin color have evaluative significance as between group differences, it is not

apparent that the effects of competition go beyond merely enhancing categorization effects. Race of the outgroup, however, appears to exert its effects as a result of social comparison processes.

In the etiology of social competition, social categorization is but the first step. Processes of social identity and social comparison are subsequently necessary to generate intergroup social competition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1975). An essential premise of this theory is that people strive for a positive self-concept. In the context of intergroup relations, group members experience pressure to evaluate their own group positively through ingroup-outgroup comparisons. Toward this end, the ingroup must be perceived as positively distinct from a relevant outgroup. For example, one which has become salient through explicit competition. The present findings offer support for the presence of such motivational influences. All of the variance due to race of the outgroup variable was accounted for in the differential attraction scores between ingroup and outgroup. This strongly suggests a self-evaluative social comparison process in which our subjects' ingroup bias was greater in the presence of a black outgroup than in the presence of a white outgroup.

Wilder and Shapiro (1984) have recently demonstrated support for a two-step process in which cues associated with a relevant outgroup elicit an ingroup identity which, subsequently, makes normative ingroup behavior more salient. In light of our results, there now appears to be substantial evidence for the

proposition that increases in ingroup bias occur as a function of ingroup-outgroup comparisons aimed at establishing positive ingroup distinctiveness. These findings lend considerable plausibility to Turner's (1981) proposal that social identity may be the most predictive social psychological variable for understanding both the development of intergroup conflict and its eventual resolution.

Table 1. Mean Relative Attraction Between Ingroup and Outgroup

	Type of Interaction		
Race of the Outgroup	Interdependent	Competitive	
Similar (white)	6.54	14.18	10.36
Dissimilar (black)	13.32	17.43	15.38
	9.93	15.80	

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